



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**Testimony by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education
Before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
10:00 a.m. – LOB Room 1E
February 24, 2009**

HB 6380 (Raised) An Act Concerning Graduate Degree Programs at Charter Oak State College

Connecticut's colleges and universities – and particularly our public institutions of higher education – have a special responsibility to educate our citizens and prepare them for productive lives and ongoing contributions to their families and to the economic well-being of our state. An essential need in Connecticut is to ensure that our educational system is responsive to the needs of the students it serves and that it continues to provide access to the changing ways in which students take advantage of educational opportunities.

Charter Oak State College, through the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium, is a leader in Connecticut in educational programs delivered online. Such delivery is critically important, particularly for students who work full-time and who have other equally important responsibilities to their families and to their communities.

The proposed change of mission for Charter Oak State College would allow it to serve the needs of students who are pursuing graduate degrees by providing degree programs through online delivery and therefore enabling students to gain additional skills and expertise that will better prepare them to contribute to the economic well-being of our state. That is a positive change, and the Department of Higher Education therefore supports the change of mission and the addition of on-line Master's degree programs at Charter Oak State College.

The Department, however, believes that it may not be necessary to include the specific degree name in the Raised Bill and that the change of mission to include undergraduate and graduate credits and degrees is sufficient to incorporate this proposed degree and grant authority to the College to submit other degree program applications to the Board of Governors for Higher Education for review and possible approval in the future.